

# An Ipswich Idyll

*Restorations revive the grand spirit of a North Shore estate.*

by NELL PORTER BROWN



**B**EHIND THE “Great House” on the Crane Estate in Ipswich, Massachusetts, a vast lawn rolls out half a mile to a bluff overlooking the Atlantic Ocean.

Few New England landscapes are as majestic as this “Grand Allée”—and far fewer are open, year-round, to the public. Even better, visitors to the site are encouraged to picnic, read, lounge, and play games on the grassy slopes, and explore easy walking trails, including one leading down to Crane Beach. Or they may tour the 59-room mansion, a rare survivor of America’s early twentieth-century country-estate era.

“We want people to gather here and enjoy this unique place,” says Bob Murray,



regional manager of Trustees (previously The Trustees of Reservations), which has owned the property since 1949. “Pictures and words don’t do the landscape justice: people just have to come see it.”

In its heyday, the estate on Castle Hill was an opulent showpiece and summer playtime paradise. An Italianate “Casino



HARVARD MAGAZINE/NPB

**Clockwise, from top left: the Crane Estate’s palatial abode and hillside Casino Complex; Florence Crane’s marble bathroom; the Grand Allée undulates out to the bluff; and the family living room with wood-paneled walls recycled from an eighteenth-century London townhouse**



## ALL IN A DAY: Hull's Lifesaving Legacy

**The best route to Hull** is by boat. As the MBTA's commuter ferry snakes among Boston Harbor's islands, passengers can eye the treacherous shipping route that gave rise to the town's Point Allerton Lifesaving Station in 1889. Back then, the "small, year-round community had no more than 300 residents; at least a third of them were involved in volunteer lifesaving," notes Victoria Stevens '96, curator of the Hull Lifesaving Museum housed in the former station. The first paid keeper, the highly decorated Captain Joshua James, rescued more than 540 people in 60 years, most from schooners carrying cargo like coal and lumber, along the Atlantic seaboard. In 1902, after a rescue drill, James disembarked on the beach, noted, "The tide is ebbing," and dropped dead.

The museum features the surfboat he and his brother designed, used from the "Great Storm" of 1888 until 1927, along with a 1930s "breeches buoy" cart with a cannon and ropes used (until 1952) to launch a weight attached to a rope onto the deck of a foundering vessel. Survivors were hauled in by a rope-pulley system that included wooden paddles inscribed with instructions in Portuguese, French, Spanish, or English. (The museum also hosts the sobering [bostonshipwrecks.org](http://bostonshipwrecks.org), which maps vessels lost in the harbor.)

The nation's Life-Saving Service (1878) and Revenue Cutter Service (1790) were joined as the U.S. Coast Guard in 1915. "Coasties" replaced lifesavers at the station, before moving in 1970 to the current outpost, barely a mile away. The museum's special exhibit, *The Point Allerton Coast Guard, 1915-2015* (through November 30), celebrates the centennial with models of the Boston Lightship and a 44-foot motor lifeboat, and a four-foot image of the new National Security Cutter *James* (named for the Hull keeper). Other artifacts and oral histories reflect the integral role lifesavers have played in local life and lore. Take Roger: in 1958, the golden retriever wandered into the station, ate a steak off the counter, and never left, Stevens reports—except for joyrides on the town bus and jaunts to

Jo's Nautical Bar. The Coast Guard, with its new global-security mission, may be less of a community lifeline than in Roger's day, but the bar's walls, packed with lifesaving memorabilia and news of modern mariners, signal that Hull's 10,000 residents are still tied

Lifesaving Museum  
<http://www.lifesavingmuseum.org>

to life on, and beside,  
the sea. ~N.P.B.



The museum, and (clockwise) surfmen with their craft; the boat designed by the James brothers and a "breeches buoy" cart; Joshua James (left), c. 1893; Roger in 1969; the station's former sign

Complex" tucked into the allée's first hillside had a courtyard with a saltwater swimming pool that was bookended by two villas: one housing a ballroom, the other providing "bachelors' quarters" for the young men who visited Chicago plumbing magnate Richard T. Crane Jr., his wife Florence, and their two children. Nearby were a bowling green, tennis court, maze, log-cabin playhouse, golf course, and deer preserve. The Cranes also ran a self-sustaining farm, with livestock, an orchard, and lush vegetable and rose gardens, along with an on-site 134,000-gallon underground water cistern and a coal-fired power plant to supply electricity.

The Trustees can't recreate the Cranes' luxurious utopia. But a three-year, \$1.5-million restoration and improvements project has helped foster the estate's spirit of relaxed sociability and extend aspects of the Cranes' lifestyle to a much wider audience. The 2,100-acre property (which encompasses the nearby Crane Wildlife Refuge) is among 112 sites owned by the Trustees that exhibit "exceptional scenic, natural, and historic beauty" across the state; these range from vegetable farms, a creamery, and rural woodlands to wildlife sanctuaries and community gardens in Boston. The most recent fundraising campaign, spearheaded by president and CEO Barbara Erickson, has promoted improvements to

the nonprofit's "signature cultural resources": Naumkeag, a Gilded Age mansion with gardens, in Stockbridge (see "Spring Forward," March-April 2013, page 24D), and Castle Hill, which are both National Historic Landmarks. In Ipswich, the restoration focused on the allée



HARVARD MAGAZINE/UC

and the Casino Complex, designed and planted more than a century ago by landscape architect Arthur A. Shurcliff, B.S. 1896. The Trustees pulled out swaths of unfettered growth within and around the allée that had obscured Shurcliff's original vision for decades, and replanted his orderly columns with more than 700 new trees that are growing in nicely. The restored Casino Complex now offers a fine-cut lawn for croquet (the pool was filled in long ago by Florence Crane), framed by a new brick terrace and comfortable chairs and tables. A Mediterranean feel persists, with "wonderful ornamentation: the Bacchanalian relief figures and marble statues," Murray notes. "The whole complex is beautifully integrated within the allée and the house." The former ballroom now holds a café, along with a billiards table, other games, and coloring kits. The original stone fireplace works and may help warm visitors, if needed, through October 16: the end of the season for the

**Richard Crane's master bath features white marble; soothing blue and cream tones suit a bedroom with ocean views.**



café and Trustees-run events like concerts, outdoor movies, scavenger hunts, and the new guided tours of the Great House. (The grounds themselves are open all year, and two special events are planned: The Crane Estate Art Show and Sale, November 6-8, and Christmas at Castle Hill, December 4-6.)

Those who tour the house as "Guests of the Cranes" are led around by a "maid" or



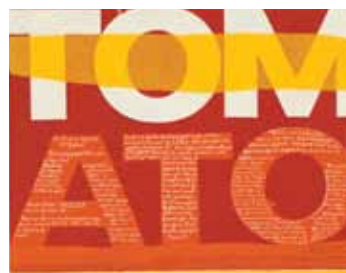
**A dreamy Italianesque landscape was recreated on New England's shoreline.**

## Harvard Art Museums

Fogg Museum  
Busch-Reisinger Museum  
Arthur M. Sackler Museum

**CORITA KENT**

Corita Kent, the latest tomato of all, 1984. Screenprint. Collection of Jason Simon, New York, T.L. 4302. © Courtesy of the Corita Kent Foundation and the Corita Kent Foundation, Los Angeles. Photo © Frederick and Elissa of Harvard College.



and

*the* **LANGUAGE of POP**

**September 3, 2015–  
January 3, 2016**

#CoritaKentPop  
[harvardartmuseums.org/coritakent](http://harvardartmuseums.org/coritakent)

Corita Kent and the Language of Pop is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts and major corporate support from National Grid.

*An Evening with Champions*

*A Jimmy Fund Benefit*  
**45** YEARS OF HISTORY

PRESENTED BY  
ELIOT HOUSE AND HARVARD UNIVERSITY  
<http://www.aneveningwithchampions.org>

SAVE THE DATE  
**SEPTEMBER 18<sup>TH</sup> & 19<sup>TH</sup>**  
**7PM** BRIGHT-LANDRY HOCKEY CENTER

**TICKETS** Regular: \$25. Group: (10+): \$20  
Seniors: \$12  
Children+Harvard ID holder: \$10  
**QUESTIONS?** [info@aneveningwithchampions.org](mailto:info@aneveningwithchampions.org)  
617-942-IEWC (1392)



“butler” brimming with tidbits on family history and the eclectic décor. The story is that Richard Crane, a fanatical sailor, was on a yacht in Ipswich Bay when he first saw Castle Hill and decided to buy it. He snapped up the first parcel in 1910 and would amass a total of 3,500 acres before his death in 1931—including what’s now Crane Beach. (Privatizing it earned him no friends in town.)

The imposing, Stuart-style English manor—a patchwork of architectural styles such as Baroque and Palladian—was designed by David Adler and completed in 1928. The side facing the allée features a main building with an inset terrace buttressed by two symmetrical wings. Second-floor porches and bay-windowed



HARVARD MAGAZINE/NPB

bedrooms offer stunning views of the water. The interior has a surprisingly rustic and homey feel for a mansion, perhaps due to the hodgepodge of decorating styles—ornate Georgian (Adler salvaged and installed wood-paneled rooms from a 1732 London townhouse, for example), along-

**Sweeping views are well worth the half-mile walk across the hilly Grand Allée.**

side Greek Revival, Italian Renaissance, and Art Deco.

Most impressive, however, are the bathrooms—befitting a plumbing millionaire. Each of the seven bedrooms has its own, many outfitted with then-cutting edge Art Deco fixtures and one decorated almost entirely in Delft tiles. Richard Crane’s features a large tub with gleaming silver-plated piping and faucets, a shower with 12 nozzles, a white marble floor, and heated towel rack. His wife’s is pale green with delicate glass shelving and loads of gray-veined marble providing an archway over the sink, the tub-surround, and flooring accents.

The Crane Company manufactured iron and steel pipes, valves, and fittings, but starting in 1914, when Richard Crane inherited the top post, he expanded into modern bathroom fixtures; the company’s exhibit at the 1933-34 Chicago World’s Fair featured the “world’s largest shower.” “We like to joke,” says the butler during one tour, “that this is the house that toilets built.” In fact, it was the second one. The Cranes initially built (between 1910 and 1912) a lavish Italian Renaissance Revival mansion designed by the Boston archi-

## CURIOSITIES:

### Animating a New Species

**PVC tubing** and zip ties form the essential “bones” of Dutch artist Theo Jansen’s otherworldly yet mobile *strandbeests* (“beach animals”), eight of which are on display at the Peabody Essex Museum (PEM) starting September 19. Included is his latest and never-before-seen *Animaris Umerus Segundus*, along with sketches that offer insight into Jansen’s creative process during the last 25 years; “fossils” of creatures no longer “alive”; and video of some “beests”

traveling in gangly equine elegance along a sandy seacoast in The Netherlands. Also on view are original photographs by Lena Herzog (published last year in *Strandbeest: The Dream Machines of Theo Jansen*) who spent seven years documenting the origins and inner workings of this new kinetic species. This marks the first major American show of Jansen’s large-scale works; it moves on to the Chicago Cultural Center and San Francisco’s Exploratorium. Jansen himself will visit the Greater Boston area for a few events, such as a panel discussion (to be webcast) with Trevor Smith, PEM’s curator of the present tense, and MIT associate professor of media arts and sciences Neri Oxman, taking place on September 10 (3-5 P.M.) at the MIT Media Lab—followed by a live, outdoor demonstration of a walking *strandbeest* (5:30-7 P.M.). ~N.P.B.



LOEK VANDERKILS

**Dutch artist Theo Jansen melds art and engineering in his intricate skeletal sculptures. Below, left to right: *Animaris Adulari* (2012) and *Animaris Apodiacula* (2013).**

Peabody Essex Museum  
*Strandbeest: The Dream Machines of Theo Jansen*  
September 19-January 3  
[www.pem.org/sites/strandbeest](http://www.pem.org/sites/strandbeest)



### Free-Standing Home in a Condominium Setting



**CONCORD ...** This iconic river front estate, set on 1.15 acres with commanding views of the Sudbury River, is located on Main Street. The historic integrity of the house has been respectfully preserved. There are 5 bedrooms, 3.5 bathrooms, and 5 fireplaces. This residence is ideal for formal entertaining as well as comfortable family living and is just one block from the commuter rail to Boston.  
... **\$1,854,000**

### Rare and Exceptional Offering at South Meadow



**CONCORD ...** Nestled on a 40 acre compound of protected natural preserve, overlooking the Concord Country Club, is this 9 room townhouse. Features include 3 bedrooms, 3.5 bathrooms, and a first floor master bedroom with a fireplace. The lower level has a family room with a fireplace, a home office, an exercise/guest room, and unfinished storage space. Just minutes to the commuter rail to Boston.  
... **\$899,000**

*The Real Estate Team of Maurer/Widell:*

**PHYLLIS MAURER & MARGUERITE L. WIDELL**



Cell: (508) 254-7900



Cell: (978) 502-7157

**www.HammondRE.com**

## **Cadbury Commons** AT CAMBRIDGE

Independent and Assisted Living  
Specialized Memory Care

What do Harvard alumni  
have in common?  
**Cadbury Commons**  
*A Remarkable Senior Residence*



The Harvard alumni who chose  
Cadbury Commons may have  
retired from work, but not from life.

Museum Visits • Play Reading  
Symphony Selections • Lecture  
Series • Yoga • Organic Gardening

Call (617) 868-0575 to arrange a personal tour,  
or visit [www.cadburycommons.com](http://www.cadburycommons.com)



66 Sherman Street, Cambridge,  
MA 02140 • (617) 868-0575



**Grace—energy—joy**

*Fall program starts 9/10  
Enroll by 8/30 & waive  
the \$25 registration fee*

**Age 3, youth, teen-adult-pointe**

Visit us at:  
[Facebook.com/FreshPondBallet](https://www.facebook.com/FreshPondBallet)  
or  
**[www.freshpondballet.com](http://www.freshpondballet.com)**

Nina Alonso, Director, FPB  
1798a Mass Ave, Cambridge  
617.491.5865

## HARVARD SQUARED



architecture firm Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge, but razed it in 1924; according to family legend, Florence Crane never liked the “Italian fiasco” because it was too “cold and drafty.”

She did, however, keep the matching Casino Complex and her beloved Italian garden, both built between 1913 and 1915. Designed by landscape architects Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. and his brother John Charles Olmsted, the garden is a hidden oasis: a forest of trees was transplanted and arranged to intentionally shroud the walled tea houses, water fountain, and abundant perennial flower beds. (The garden is currently under restoration.) Crane later dismissed the Olmsteds and hired Shurcliff, their former associate, to work on the Casino Complex landscaping and to design the allée. “We can speculate that it was because they had a very different vision for a much more open landscape at the estate,” Murray adds, “and that Crane didn’t want that. But we don’t know for certain what the reasons were.”

Shurcliff (a mentee of Olmsted firm partner Charles Eliot, A.B. 1882, the son of Harvard president Charles William Eliot and the primary founder of The Trustees of Reservations in 1891) lived down the road from the Cranes. He certainly shared the Olmsteds’ naturalist aesthetic. “But one aspect of his genius,” Bob Murray notes of the allée’s meticulous design, “was the





**Two views of the newly restored and inviting Casino Complex at the Crane Estate**

way he took this European aesthetic and adapted it to the New England landscape.” Shurcliff enhanced the inherent hilliness and dramatized the approach to the Ipswich Bay and ocean vista: benches on the bluff overlook Ipswich’s Little Neck Harbor, Plum Island, and several beaches as well. He seamlessly tied the landscape to the formidable hilltop home by ensuring that the land was sheared down to a lawn (echoing the aristocratic grounds in English country homes) and installing a rigorously spare and symmetrical planting structure.

Florence Crane reportedly loved her new “English manor” and spent extended summers there until she died in 1949, having previously bequeathed the estate to the Trustees. Parts of the property have been open to the public ever since, according to Murray. Within the last 15 years, about \$6 million has been invested in capital improvements, starting in 2000 with the wholesale renovation of a shingle “cottage” on the estate (where the Cranes lived while the “Great House” was being built). The Trustees now run it as The Inn at Castle Hill.

Murray is now overseeing the first phase of the Italian garden restoration. Plans include reviving the water features and replicating the original Rainbow Fountain sculpture by Bela Lyon Pratt, restoring the wooden pergola that links the teahouses, and replanting the flowerbeds. By next spring, the sanctuary is slated to open for walkers, gardeners, and sun-lovers—anyone seeking a quiet and beautiful spot. Florence Crane’s former rose garden, however, will be left as is. “We envision that,” Murray says, “as someplace we can enjoy...as a romantic ruin.”

## Welcome to Your Dental Home



*Premier Dental Care* offers patients a “dental home”—we are committed to your individual attention and strive to provide personalized oral health care tailored to your unique dental needs. *Premier Dental Care* covers all of your dental needs in one convenient and nurturing location:

- Professional Cleanings & Fillings
- Invisalign
- Bonding & Porcelain Veneers
- Zoom Teeth Whitening
- Oral Cancer Screening
- Crowns & Bridgework
- Periodontist & Endodontist on staff (gum work, implants, extractions & root canals)



*Contact us to set up a consultation!*

377 Main St, Watertown, MA | 617.923.8100 | [premierdmd.com](http://premierdmd.com)

## Step Outside with Outward Bound Professional!

“Harvard has worked with OBP for 20+ years. OBP custom designs our program to provide students the opportunity to examine their team’s development and become aware of their leadership assumptions. OBP masterfully provides this experience.”

- **David King**, Faculty Chair, MPA Programs,  
Harvard Kennedy School of Government



Photo by: Tom Fitzsimmons



**THOMPSON ISLAND**  
OUTWARD BOUND PROFESSIONAL  
Boston Harbor Islands National Park

(617) 830-5114  
[eharris@thompsonisland.org](mailto:eharris@thompsonisland.org)  
[www.thompsonisland.org](http://www.thompsonisland.org)